REMARKS

Applicants acknowledge that claims 19-22 and 26 are allowed and claims 14-17 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten into independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and intervening claims.

Applicants also acknowledge Examiner Rinehart's time and courtesy during the personal interview on April 27, 2004, with Applicants' representative James E. Ruland. No exhibit was shown and no demonstration was conducted, claims 10, 24 and 25 were discussed, and U.S. Patent Nos. 5,100,509 (Pisecky), 5,773,061 (Getler), 5,632,100 (Hansen), and 5,149,398 (Shaffer) were discussed. No amendments were proposed. Below is a summary of the arguments presented.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C §112, First Paragraph

Claims 24 and 25 stand rejected as allegedly failing to comply with the written description requirement. Applicants respectfully submit that written description for these claims is provided at page 4, lines 40-42 and page 7 of the specification, as well as FIG. 1. Consequently, Applicants respectfully submit that these rejections should be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C §103

Claims 10 and 23 stand rejected as allegedly being unpatentable over Pisecky in view of Getler. However, there is insufficient motivation for modifying the spray-drying chamber 3 of Pisecky to include a fluidized bed apparatus. As an example, placing a fluidized bed in the spray-drying chamber 3 would apparently place the powder from the atomizer wheel 5 near the outlet duct 10. This would result in product being recycled through the cyclones 11

rather than being passed from the bed 9. See, e.g., an upward air stream 14 underneath bed 7. Moreover, there is no disclosure of a filter in a spray tower and/or for filtering gas exiting a spray tower (relevant to claims 24 and 25).

Furthermore, Pisecky pertains to a process for producing stable particle agglomerates, by forming droplets with an atomizer wheel. A drying air stream is directed predominately transversely against the falling droplets, and the finest fraction of particles of the material is recovered and recycled to the drying chamber to collide with the ejected, and only partly dried, particles. See column 2. There is no teaching or suggestion within Pisceky to incorporate a fluidized bed in the drying chamber, or discussion of operating such a fluidized bed so as not to interfere with the formation of agglomerates within the drying chamber. Consequently, there is insufficient motivation for combining these references to render the claimed invention unpatentable.

Claims 10-11, 13, 23, and 25 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Schaffer in view of Hansen. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Shaffer discloses a process and apparatus for producing a fast-dissolving granular product, namely calcium hypochlorite (col. 3, lines 10-30). Referring to Fig. 1, Shaffer recycles particles to a turbine agglomerator 18, where a liquid is sprayed onto the particles. The agglomerator increases the particle size and density to that desired via crushing, agglomeration, and compactation by rotating paddles that mix the recycled feed material with the liquid. Afterwards, the agglomerated materials return to the fluidized bed via the fines return conveyor 19. The conveyor 19 appears similarly to the conveyor 12, which is an auger or screw (see col. 3, lines 54-61 and col. 5, lines 24-33).

With respect to Hansen, Hansen discloses a process of producing an agglomerated powder which includes recycling fine powder particles. See col. 2, lines 44-58. Fig. 1 of Hansen appears to disclose a pump or turbine for moving these dust particles in Hansen's process. Hansen's process and apparatus can be used in a large variety of agglomerate powders, such as dyestuffs and food products. See col. 5, lines 35-40.

However, there appears to be insufficient motivation to include a fan as suggested by the action. Particularly, the particles in Shaffer are combined with a liquid at the turbine agglomerator and densified. Such densification appears to require a mechanical auger to feed these massed particles back to the fluidized dryer 11. In marked contrast, Hansen, at most, discloses a pump or turbine for moving fine particles. Applicants respectfully submit that there is no suggestion that a fan may be desirable to move the wet, heavy massed particles disclosed in Shaffer. Consequently, applicants respectfully submit that there is insufficient motivation to make the modifications suggested by the action, and thus, the references are not combinable, and cannot render the invention *prima facie* obvious.

In view of the above, favorable reconsideration is courteously requested. If there are any remaining issues which can be expedited by a telephone conference, the examiner is courteously invited to telephone counsel at the number indicated below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this response or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-3402.

Respectfully submitted,

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